

CONSIDERING the completely alien conditions at Mayesbrook Park, Barking, on Saturday, Wycombe Wanderers can feel happy with the single Rothmans Isthmian League point that keeps them in with a chance of the championship.

For both players and spectators alike, this match was quite a trial. Barking moved from their old Vicarage Field ground to Mayesbrook Park in September, taking with them only the bare essentials. Obviously it takes a long time for a club to settle into a new ground but for the moment, conditions are spartan to say the least.

The players had to contend with a terrible surface that, although well grassed was terribly bumpy and could even have been dangerous. The spectators had to go without a stand or any seating accommodation and clustered round the touchlines like those watching a park match.

The conditions made life very troublesome for Wycombe — a team that relies on good surfaces

to play at their best. But their fast moving game, held together by passing accuracy, just wasn't on at Barking. Added to this they were faced by a side that beaten Walton and Hersham, noted as one of the toughest clubs in the league, but the amazing margin of 6-1 seven days previous.

But Wanderers responded well and dominated the vast majority of the game which never lacked excitement. Both sides did well to produce good football and with Hendon held to an identical scoreline at home to Kingstonian, the two points dropped were not quite so vital.

The bounce, high and uneven, made things difficult for both sides, especially goalkeepers. John Maskell was in trouble as early as the ninth minute when he dropped Colin Moore's high cross but the ball was hurriedly cleared away.

Then at the other end, a weak pass back from a Barking defender saw 'keeper Paul Kitson race out of his goal and hack the ball away as Evans raced in. It was a significant start by Evans, whose game improved 100 per cent on recent perfor-

mances and gave Wycombe much more venom upfront.

In a blustery wind, the action swayed from end to end but the tall and resilient Barking defence, with their two teenage centre backs playing well, kept Wycombe at bay. With the wind advantage, Barking used the long ball constantly and Maskell once sprinted too far out of his area and had to head the ball away for a corner.

He followed that with a fine save in the 25th minute after Mal Crissell, the home side's most dangerous forward, found himself with time and room inside the Blues box. After 29 minutes Crissell used his pace to dart through again, but once more he was thwarted by Maskell who dived bravely to save.

Wycombe, still attempting to play their own game down the flanks, all but took the lead in the 32nd minute as play switched to the other end. Evans, near the bye line, shielded the ball well before crossing to the near post with an overhead kick. Steve Perrin challenged the goalkeeper for the ball which fell loose for Pritchard to loft in a header. But it bounced past the

By STUART EARP Barking 0, Wycombe Wanderers 0

far post as three defenders raced back to cover the line.

After that close shave, Wycombe began to stamp their authority on the game. Perrin misused a header in the 39th minute but as Mick Holifield started to spray the ball about with commendable accuracy, Barking came in for some heavy pressure. Despite an injury to centre half Dave Waite, however, they could produce nothing clear cut and at half time the sides were still on level terms.

But after just three minutes of the new period, Wycombe could easily have been a goal up. Evans showed excellent control before crossing into the box where Holifield caught the ball perfectly on the volley. It looked a goal all the way until Kitson flung himself to his right and palmed the ball away for a corner.

On the hour, Barking went even closer and were distinctly unlucky not to take the lead. Bobby Winters, Walters' replacement, picked up the ball some 30 yards out. Making ground, he hit the ball perfectly as it bounced, volleying it

towards the Wycombe net. Maskell dived to fist-it over but the ball dipped, thudded onto the underside of the crossbar and came down. It could easily have gone into the net there and then but instead the ball bounced down, struck Maskell who was on the floor and then bobbed nicely for the much relieved goalkeeper to gather.

With Reardon at full back (and making a good job of it too), the midfield lacked weight in Mackenzie despite all his enthusiasm. Too often he was hustled off the ball and his stature gave him no chance in the 50-50 situations. It was understandable then that he should be replaced by Derek Gamblin in the 74th minute. 'Gambol' moving to right back and Reardon to midfield.

The switch, although sound in principle, never really came off. Short of match practice, Gamblin could do very little right, committing a couple of fouls and wasting two potentially good attacks.

Phil Wood, not noted for his attacking ability, went close with 77 minutes gone, dipping in a volley from 20 yards and forcing Kitson to concede a corner with

another good save. The flag kick, however, was wasted, like so many of Wycombe's dead ball situations all afternoon. Both Holifield and Grant sent the ball behind the net once each and when Reardon tried his hand, he struck the corner flag with his boot. To his credit he was able to make something of the error.

The ball, it seemed, just wasn't running for Wycombe and on many occasions passes were just out of reach or bounced awkwardly. There was nothing wrong with Perrin's shot in the 80th minute, however, driving in a low effort which Kitson reacted to in lightning style.

In the last ten minutes Barking hardly managed to get the ball in their own half. Evans saw one effort deflected and Pritchard sent a low shot to the near post where the goalkeeper gathered well. Forcing three late corners it seemed Wycombe might clinch a late score but it was not to be and they had to be satisfied with their third goalless draw of the season.

BARKING: P. Kitson; P. Whettell, C. Daltry, D. Waite, R. Amirikis, R. Winters, K. Varney, S. Oliver; M. Crissell, A. Kiff, C. Moore. Sub. J. Foster (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; T. Reardon, K. Mead, D. Bullock, R. Grant; G. Mackenzie (sub. D. Gamblin 74 mins.), P. Wood, M. Holifield; S. Perrin, D. Evans, L. Pritchard.

Referee: A. Ward.